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DENSE LOCAL KNOWLEDGE: GROUNDING LOCAL TO SUPRA-LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS IN TENTH-CENTURY CASTILE*

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Dense Local Knowledge as the Interface between Scales

A major topic for this volume is to study the bi-directional nature of the relationship between localities and larger-scale social processes.¹ Whilst top-down agency is more readily apparent in our evidence, the ways in which early medieval localities contributed to shape their 'worlds beyond' needs also to be problematized. The development of social complexity was in most cases driven by powerful forces operating at the scale of polities, but governance, justice, taxation, aristocratic estates, and so on, needed to be grounded locally, and the 'local' was rarely raw clay that could be modeled as desired. The inner rationales of early medieval localities both placed limits on and provided opportunities for supra-local actors, depending on specific contexts.

This chapter explores the notion of Dense Local Knowledge as one possible interface between the local and the supra-local, as applied to the specific case of land transactions recorded in charters of the monastery of San Pedro de Cardena in tenth-century Castile. Land is by definition local, and owning and transferring land very much a local affair. Even if the property is large, and even if the owner is a supra-local potentate, the specific plots lie in some locale and are related to other components of local space, and 'make sense' together. The reason why they make sense together is that knowledge about landownership is part of the socially determined web of ideas about local space that we call landscape,² which is in turn a spatial reflection of local knowledge.³

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¹ See also the contributions to Davies, Halsall, and Reynolds, eds, *People and Space in the Middle Ages* and Escalona and Reynolds, eds, *Scale and Scale Change in the Early Middle Ages*.

² Tilley, *A phenomenology of landscape*, pp. 7-34.

³ There is an abundant anthropological literature on Local Knowledge. Most authors point out the works of Clifford Geertz as a major turning point in the field (Geertz, 'Local Knowledge: Fact and Law'), but today the most visible strand is perhaps Development Studies, which focus upon the role of Local Knowledge in development, and the conceptual and political issues derived from its encounters with 'global'—often termed 'western', sometimes 'scientific'—forms of knowledge. See, for example, Pottier, Bicker, and Sillitoe, eds, *Negotiating local knowledge*. On the diversity of terms employed in the literature to refer to local knowledge, see Antweiler, 'Local Knowledge and Local Knowing', p. 471.

Local knowledge can be defined as the representation of themselves and their space that inhabitants of a given locality (a local community⁴) create, share and maintain. Because of its holistic character, it is primarily about identity, power and memory. Local knowledge is built through the interactions of local actors, sometimes at ‘formal’ events, such as rituals, festivals, or dispute settlements, but mostly through ‘informal’ everyday activities.⁵ Whilst the former provide occasions for more articulate discourses about the local ‘we’, the latter determine its contents and details, mainly through unconscious, even non-verbal repetitions of actions and behaviours. Local knowledge is also by nature a composite; the result of multiple, often conflicting views derived from social groupings and differences within the locality. It is also situational and uneven. It is wrong to assume that ‘knowledge of indigenous peoples and local communities is evenly distributed and that practically every member of the group knows the same’.⁶ Factors such as age, gender, profession or, above all, status may determine not only ‘who knows what’, but also ‘whose knowledge’ will prevail as local knowledge. In this regard, the label ‘local knowledge’, in the singular, projects a misleading image of unanimity upon a multi-layered, continuously negotiated phenomenon.⁷

As I have proposed elsewhere, the most distinctive attribute of local knowledge is its ‘density’.⁸ It comprises rich information about all actors, their families, their property, their conflicts and alliances, their external ties, and so on, to a degree that cannot be achieved at a supra-local scale. It also has an ‘historical’ dimension in as much as people and events find their place in a discursive, not necessarily chronological, past, that works as a genealogy—a legitimating device—for the present. Just as importantly, it has a strong spatial dimension, as it entails high-resolution knowledge of local space, with all its components and limits, and an intensive symbolization of that space, by associating specific landscape features to other dimensions, from ecological expertise and perception of natural resources, to property relations, or the group’s history. Ownership of land and use rights over natural resources—the backbone of economic activities and social difference—is a paramount component of local knowledge, and it tends to be heavily spatialized. In most early medieval societies, the local landscape unfolds as an intricate mosaic of rights and claims, from land appropriated by individuals or kin groups to areas subjected to common exploitation, which leave their print in the form of land-use patterns and, above all, a web of physical boundaries, like scars on the surface of the earth. Knowledge of those boundaries and of their social meaning is an essential aspect of ‘being in place’ locally.⁹ This kind of holistic, spatialized, discursive set of notions about the local ‘we’ I will call ‘Dense Local Knowledge’ (DLK). The acquisition of DLK is the unintended consequence of local life; a kind of passive learning of high adaptive value. It can be seen as a long-term investment in, attachment to, and membership of, local society. Such an investment forms the important symbolic and practical capital of individuals that is lost when actors change localities.¹⁰

Local knowledge is, of course, not exclusive. Locals usually also know something about non-local spaces and people, both near and far. Proximity is important: neighbours usually have more detailed knowledge about a nearby locality than people from further afield do.¹¹ The boundaries between DLK networks are therefore fuzzy rather than well-defined. However, DLK, including transitional neighbourly

⁴ I use the term community here as shortcut to designate the people living their everyday lives within a defined, commonly recognized space that they exploit for their livelihood, much in the sense proposed by Morsel for the central and later middle ages (Morsel, ‘Les logiques communautaires’). However, I am not considering here more ‘political’ aspects, such as community governance, membership or exclusion, or inner social differences. For a detailed discussion, see Davies, ‘Introduction: Community Definition and Community Formation’ and Davies, ‘Populations, Territory and Community Membership’.

⁵ Tilley, *A phenomenology of landscape*, pp. 7-34; Fentress and Wickham, *Social Memory*, pp. 41-86; Connerton, *How Societies Remember*; Cattell and Climo, ‘Meaning in Social Memory and History’.

⁶ Antweiler, ‘Local Knowledge and Local Knowing’, p. 472.

⁷ Pottier, ‘Negotiating local knowledge : an introduction’, p. 2.

⁸ Escalona, Alfonso, and Reyes Téllez, ‘Arqueología e historia de los paisajes medievales’; Escalona, ‘Territorialidad e identidades locales’.

⁹ On the material dimensions of land ownership see Relaki and Catapoti, eds, *An Archaeology of Land Ownership*, esp. Souvatzi, ‘Land Tenure’.

¹⁰ Cox and Mair, ‘From localized social-structures’, p. 199.

¹¹ Antweiler, ‘Local Knowledge and Local Knowing’, p. 474.

knowledge, is conceptually different from supra-local knowledge. This tends to be selective, rather than holistic. Supra-local actors occupying higher social positions may hold a wider view (knowledge about many different localities), and they may perceive things that are less evident to local people (like the value of a local resource in a long-distance exchange network, or the strategic implications of a locality in a larger territorial articulation), but they hold this knowledge at the expense of high-resolution DLK. When engaged with a specific locality, supra-local actors rarely participate in the continuous making and sharing of local knowledge. They may eventually gain significant knowledge about the locality and its people, provided that they invest the necessary time and effort (think of ethnographers), or make privileged links with local actors, but this can hardly compare with membership of a DLK network. I will call this wider-reaching but less dense form of knowledge ‘Extensive Supra-local Knowledge’ (ESK).¹² Of course, just as local knowledge is accessible to non-local actors, so too can local people gain supra-local knowledge, and, of course, some localities and regions, like coastal settlements, have easier access to information from far away than others.¹³ Indeed most local actors have conceptions of the ‘world beyond’ through personal experience or cultural transmission, and they always have a larger ‘world view’ that is a crucial component of their self-representation, as Orri Vésteinsson argues convincingly in this volume for medieval Iceland.¹⁴

DLK is, of course, of varying relevance to society as a whole, depending on the capacities of supra-local actors to raise information of enough resolution about the localities which can then be used to secure and reproduce the material basis of social difference. By the same token, it might have been a much more important factor in early medieval state formation than is normally presumed. At this time in Western Europe, large-scale cadastral records were virtually nonexistent and territorial surveys were exceptional and fragmentary.¹⁵ How did elites deal with the problem of identifying the specific land units that came into their possession? In what follows, a charter collection from tenth-century Castile will be analyzed to search for traces of the role of DLK at the interface between the local and supra-local scales to see if and how it influenced the creation of patterns of property relations.

Boundaries and Local Knowledge in the Cardena Charters

The period considered here ranges from the early tenth century to AD 1038, when the county of Castile formally came to an end. The source materials are the charters transmitted by the cartulary of San Pedro de Cardena, near Burgos. In the tenth century, Cardena was the most important monastery in the county of Castile, with strong associations with secular power. During this period, Cardena developed extensive estates, scattered throughout the central areas of the county and occasionally much further afield. As far as our information goes, by the mid-tenth century Cardena was a great landowner, second only to the Count of Castile.¹⁶ The evidence for the abbey’s accumulation of property is preserved in a late eleventh-century cartulary, the so-called *Becerro Gótico de Cardena*.¹⁷ There are 223 genuine charters spanning the period 899–1038, 141 of them issued to Cardena, a further 46 originally granted to other monasteries, and 36 recording the deeds of private individuals. Although encompassing a variety of themes, the vast majority of the charters record property transactions (donations, sales, and exchanges), sometimes more than one per charter, so the total figure of recorded land transfers rises to 296. Whilst this represents a substantial corpus which can be used for quantitative analysis, it is crucial to bear in mind that their coverage is uneven

¹² Escalona, Alfonso, and Reyes Téllez, ‘Arqueología e historia de los paisajes medievales’; pp. 107–113.

¹³ See Harrison, *Medieval Space*, pp. 14–23. I am grateful to Stuart Brookes’s comments on this particular point.

¹⁴ Vésteinsson, this volume.

¹⁵ Notorious exceptions, like Domesday Book or the Carolingian polyptics show, however, not only the enormous intricacy and variability of local contexts, but also that some institutions achieved astounding capacities for field inquiry, even in the early medieval period. See Devroey, ‘Gérer et exploiter la distance’.

¹⁶ On the making of Cardena’s estates, see Moreta Velayos, *Génesis y desarrollo del dominio del Monasterio de San Pedro de Cardena (902–1338)*.

¹⁷ It is actually the largest sub-set within the documentary corpus from the County of Castile. The cartulary as such as was edited as *Becerro Gótico de Cardena*, ed. by Serrano. There is a recent new edition with a comprehensive study: Fernández Flórez and Serna Serna, eds, *El Becerro Gótico de Cardena*. The charters have been edited in chronological order by Martínez Díez, ed., *Cardena*. See also Escalona, ‘La documentación de la Castilla condal’.

both geographically—there are huge gaps and over-represented areas—and chronologically: the bulk of the cases group in the period 940–90, with a remarkable peak in the 960s (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1: Land transactions in the Cardeña charters by date, 899–1038. Source: Author.

Whereas a transfer itself may reflect relations at various scales, from strictly local deals to transactions between high elites, every land plot exchanged has an obvious local dimension. An accurate identification of the property exchanged was necessary to both parties, and indeed those transfers usually contain a wealth of topographical information. However, there were extreme variations, both in conception and intensity, in how each plot was registered. In this paper I will briefly address three aspects of how local knowledge is reflected in charter-making. Firstly, the varying degrees of topographical detail which can be observed; secondly, how local social networks and memory were embedded in boundary clauses; thirdly, the significance of undefined locations and/or boundaries.

Topographical detail: Location and Boundaries

The Cardeña charters include transfers of property ranging from simple units, like an arable field, a vineyard, a vegetable garden or an orchard, and groups thereof (in various quantities), to complex units like and individual's whole inheritance, or even whole *villae*. Exceptionally lavish donations to the Church could include several, even many *villae*, but there are no transfers of whole districts or other supralocal discrete units comprising several *villae* in the Cardeña collection.

The first level in the identification of exchanged land was its location. Larger units, like *villae* tended to be located by their name, and, if needed, by reference to other adjacent *villae*, to the district where they lay (*alfoz*, *suburbium*, or cognate terms),¹⁸ or—rarely—to larger geographical regions like Castile or the

¹⁸ Davies, *Acts of giving*, pp. 195-196. In Castile *villa* seems to designate a small territory that can be considered 'local', although it does not necessarily equate to a village-type settlement, and may well have had a more abstract meaning, as the scale-unit through which elites of this period organized their estates and collected revenues. See Álvaro Carvajal's contribution to this

Bureba.¹⁹ The *villa* in turn was the most frequent locational reference for smaller units, like arable plots or vineyards, although a minority of those cases also referred to districts, valleys²⁰ or even specific parts of a *villa* territory.²¹ However, location within one *villa* was the norm.

The size of the properties obviously determines how much detail is needed to identify them; land plots must be singled out from other neighbouring land plots, vineyards from other vineyards, *villae* from other *villae*. The bulk of property transactions in the Cardena charters were of small items such as arable plots, vineyards, meadows, etc. – that is, individual pieces in the mosaic of comparable elements comprising the local agricultural landscape. These needed to be identified with some precision, the boundaries being usually expressed by the names of the owners of the adjacent properties, and by—mostly linear—landscape features, such as roads, footpaths, streams or rivers.²² In the medieval West there was a long established tradition—derived from the classical quadrangular model of Antiquity—of recording four boundaries, arranged by cardinal points.²³ However, in the Castilian charters cardinal points are exceptional; instead vaguer expressions like ‘de una parte [...] de alia parte [...] de tertia parte’ (on one side [...] on the other side [...] on the third side), etc. were used, and there are many instances of plots defined by only two or three references. For example, in C169 (976), an arable field lay ‘iusta illo prato; et de una pars karrera qui discurrit ad Burgos, et de alia pars uinea de Christofori, et in tertia parte alia karrera qui discurrit ubique’ (by the meadow, on one side the road that leads to Burgos; on the other Christoforus’s vineyard; on the third another road that runs across); and in C 183 (981) a vineyard was just defined as ‘uinea nostra propria [...] in loco qui dicitur Poza, ltus uinea de Mahomate, et de alia pars de Munio’ (our own vineyard [...] in the place called Poza, by Mahomate’s vineyard and Munio on the other side).

The Cardena charters comprise fourteen transfers of larger properties such as sections of pasture and/or woodland, wide-ranging water rights or—rarely—whole *villae*. The boundaries of some of them were rendered by means of a side-by-side, more-or-less detailed description, sometimes arranged by cardinal points,²⁴ but in other cases a perambulation, that is, a linear circumnavigation of the limits, was employed.²⁵ For example, in 972 the boundaries of an enclosed stretch of pasture in Ausín were described by means of a circumnavigation:

Et damus ista defesa per locis predictis: de ualle de Ermegildo per terminos, et pergit uia de somba lombra uia que uadit ad Palatiolos et fingit in fonte de Amato, et de fonte de Amato descendit per uia ad pruno et fingit in uia de Fossato, et reuertit per uia de Fossato et fingit in Asperilla (C153, 972).

[...and we give this enclosure with the following boundaries: from the limits of the valley of Ermegildo, and continues through the road on the ridge that goes to Palazuelos and ends in the fountain of Amato; and from the fountain of Amato it goes down the road of the prune

volume, but also Escalona, ‘De ‘señores y campesinos’’. A thorough analysis of the term in Portuguese charters in Marques, *Da representação documental à materialidade do espaço*, pp. 218-229.

¹⁹ Castile (conceivably meaning the Castilla Vieja region): C37, 942; the Bureba: C47, 944x950.

²⁰ Valleys were used as locational qualifiers in 5% of all transactions, but that term could just as well designate a large hydrographical unit containing several settlements as a minor water course inside a local territory. In a few cases, it is even possible to detect a certain degree of overlapping between the terms *villa* and ‘valley’. Escalona, ‘Acerca de la territorialidad en la Castilla altomedieval: tres casos significativos’; Escalona, ‘De ‘señores y campesinos’; Escalona, ‘Mapping Scale Change’.

²¹ For instance, in 964 (C115) an enclosed woodland was located ‘in locum que dicitur Elzinetum’ (in the place they call Elzinetum), and in 965 (C127) a complex set of property lay in the place called *Trascastellum* (= behind the castle).

²² A. Marques has produced a comprehensive typology of landscape features used as boundaries in Portuguese charters. To the best of my knowledge, there is no such inventory for Castile yet, but there is a great coincidence in the types and terms between both regions (Marques, *Da representação documental à materialidade do espaço*, pp. 317- 329).

²³ Metcalfe, ‘Orientation in Three Spheres’. See specific cases in Devroey, ‘Gérer et exploiter la distance’ and Bourin, ‘Délimitation des parcelles’. The Cardena charters are in general less systematic than the Languedocian examples studied by Bourin, and their topographical information is also less abundant.

²⁴ See also Davies, *Acts of giving*, p. 8.

²⁵ See Langlands, this volume, and also Devroey, Jean-Pierre, and Michel Lauwers, ‘L’« espace » des historiens médiévistes’, esp. pp. 448-53.

and ends in the road of Fossato, and returns through that road of Fossato and terminates in Asperilla].

By contrast, another stretch of pasture called Valzalamio was recorded in 935 with boundaries arranged by cardinal points, to the detriment of linearity.

ipsum locum nominatum Balzaramio cum suos terminos: ad parte de Orientis Balle de Fontis et uiam que discurrit per Ualle de Olmo ad iuso, et parte occidentis ubi se iungit Ballezaramio cum ualle de Ulmo, et ad parte de Alsanza usque ad campo de Sanzio, consygnato per manu sayone Apre de Lara pernominatum... (C27, 935)

[the place called Valzalamio with its boundaries: on the east the Fountain's valley and the road that goes along the Elm valley; on the west where Valzalamio meets the Elm valley, and on the side of [the river] Arlanza up to the field of Sancho, as delimited by the hand of the officer [*saio*] called Aper of Lara.]²⁶

The last sentence reveals that, although the description is given by cardinal points, the boundaries had been formally recognized—most likely perambulated—by an officer.²⁷ It is therefore possible that some of the larger transactions involved the perambulation of property even if this was not explicitly recorded or if it was expressed by cardinal points. However, this need not always be the case, especially when the object was a *villa*. The transfer of a whole *villa* is a distinctively high-status affair and, in comparison to the rest of the kingdom of León, occurs very rarely in Castile: just 8 times (2.7 %) in the Cardeña charters.²⁸ When being transferred, most *villae* were not perambulated, nor described in any detail. Sometimes only the village name was cited (2 cases), maybe adding the name of the district (1 case), or at most citing the adjacent *villae* (2 cases). For example, in 929 the now deserted village of Pedernales was donated to Cardeña:

Ideoque placuit mici atque conuenit, [...] ut [...] trado [...] uillam nominata quod uocitant Peternales, iusta atrium Sancta Lucidia, ipsas sernas et ipsas hereditates que ibi abuimus, et integrum sancte aecclisiae uestre sint confirmitate per omnibus temporibus, cum ingressus et regressus, cum suos terminus. (C18, 929)

[Therefore, I have pleasure in [...] giving [...] the aforesaid *villa* that is called Pedernales, by the church of Sancta Lucidia, together with the *sernas* and the estates that we possess there, may they all be forever confirmed to you with entrances and exits, with their boundaries.]

The donation also included grazing rights 'within the same boundaries' (*per ipsis terminis*) down to the river Cabia, which means that at least twice the existence of *villa* boundaries was mentioned, though they were never specified. The same can be presumed for all the aforementioned transfers of *villae*: they all had precise boundaries, but there was apparently no need to write them down. The cases where more detailed expressions occur are worth analyzing. In 931, King Alfonso IV confirmed the possession of Villafria by the monks of Cardeña:

ordinamus adque contestamus firmiter stare post parte ipsius monasterii deseruientium Uilla Frida per omnis terminis et exitis de Aecclisia Alba usque ad Orbanelia et de Uilla Aiuta usque continet in Castaniar, et de ipsa uilla Castaniar usque continet in uilla de Uascones, et infra ipsas uillas intrata usque in flumen Aslanzon sicuti et obtinuistis de populatione primeua in diebus principum

²⁶ It is not easy to assess and translate the place names in this charter. Most topographical terms are small local valleys, but while Valzalamio (= valley of Zalamib) remained as the name of a large area, others did not.

²⁷ See further on this issue Escalona, 'Acerca de la territorialidad en la Castilla altomedieval: tres casos significativos', pp. 231-237.

²⁸ Compare with the abundance of *villae* transferred in the León area, as discussed by Carvajal Castro, 'La construcción de la monarquía asturleonense', pp. 201-276.

priorum, nostroruun auorum et parentum, et sicuti pueros nostros Zuleiman et Aiub determinauerant et consygnauerunt; ita et ex presenti die omnia firmiora cuncta possideatis adque defendatis absque alicuius inquietatione plebis aut comitibus (C20, 931).

[We order and establish for Villafria to remain firmly in the hands of the servants of the aforesaid monastery, according to its boundaries and exits, from Ecclesia Alba to Orbaneja and from Villayuda to Castañares, and from the same village Castañares up to Villa Báscones and from those villages downwards, with access to the river Arlanzón just as you obtained it from the first population in the time of the previous princes, our grand-parents and our parents, and just as our servants Zuleiman and Aiub delimited and assigned. And from this moment on, let you firmly possess all that and defend it against any disturbance from the people or the counts.]²⁹

Although not a proper perambulation, as it only defines the southern limits of Villafria's territory, the charter mentions the formal recognition on the ground by royal officers, and the final sentence clearly hints at some kind of conflict that made it necessary to review and confirm the boundaries. Nevertheless, *villa* limits are clearly given in broad strokes, taking for granted a more detailed knowledge of each *villa*'s precise limits. Perhaps more strikingly, another charter of 963 records the donation of two villages. The first, San Martín, is located merely by reference to the district (*alfoz*) of Burgos; however, the second, Orbaneja de Picos (nearby Villafria), is defined by a rough perambulation of its boundaries:

alia uilla pernominata Orbanelia de Pikis cum terris et uineis, ortys, pumiferis, molinaris, pratis, pascuis, padulibus, defesas lignarum uel pascentes omni ganato per suis terminis usque in flumine Aslanzone, de uilla quod dicitur Aslanzone et pergit aqua per omnes uillas usque in uilla quod dicitur Castaniaries, per suis terminis [...] et de Castaniaries uia que uadit ad Uilla Frida et de Uilla Frida strata que pergit ad Riwo de Uena, deinde per summa serra de Adtaporca usque ad aecclesiae Sancti Uincenti qui est super illa cueba, et in directo per illa uia qui discurrit ad Aslanzone. (C109, 963).

[another *villa* called Orbaneja de Picos with arable and vineyards, vegetable gardens, orchards, mills, meadows, pastures, woodland enclosures for firewood as well as for grazing all kinds of livestock, by its boundaries down to the river Arlanzón, from the *villa* called Arlanzón, and goes downstream by every *villa* up to the one called Castañares, by its boundaries [...], and from Castañares, through the road that leads to Villafria, and from Villafria through the road that leads to Rubena, and then by the top of the Atapuerca ridge until the church of San Vicente that lies on top of the cave, and then directly by the road that goes down to Arlanzón.]

Villa boundaries only exceptionally required detailed records because they already existed in local knowledge.³⁰ It follows that whenever *villa* boundaries are described in detail, even with the intervention of royal or comital officers, we can envisage that either the charter reacted to an existing conflict or was trying to prevent a future one. Maybe also, it sanctioned some kind of alteration to the existing limits, as may have been the case of Orbaneja de Picos, whose written limits include rights to the riverside pastures of the Arlanzón, potentially in conflict with several neighbouring settlements. The area around Orbaneja and Villafria seems to have been a contested part of Cardena's domains, which perhaps would invite us to see the boundary clauses in those charters as later additions, as certainly several other documents relating to that area were manipulated, if not entirely forged, by monks in the eleventh century. However, there are grounds for believing the 931 charter to be genuine. The statement that two royal servants (*pueros*) recognized the Villafria territory *in situ*, is paralleled in other transactions of the tenth century,³¹ perhaps indicating that the area was already in dispute from this time. This situation is perhaps more eloquently

²⁹ I am grateful to Wendy Davies for comments on this text, especially regarding the translation of the term 'consygnauerunt'. See Davies, *Windows on Justice*, pp. 135-136 and 166.

³⁰ See a very similar point for Anglo-Saxon England in Langlands, this volume.

³¹ See Carvajal Castro, 'La construcción de la monarquía asturleonense', pp. 152-153.

illustrated in another charter from 947, in which the aristocrat Vermudo Gudéstioz donated to Cardena the *villa* called Lacio (location unknown), which he had previously obtained in a lawsuit settled by the count of Castile. He describes his *villa* as being by its ‘ancient boundaries’, but then goes on to specify them: ‘from the boundaries of *villa* Cisterna and the road that leads to Castile, and on the other side, the road that leads to Poza; and on the other side the fountain called Sabuco...’.³² Lacio’s ‘ancient boundaries’ were surely well known to the locals, but the fact that the transfer derived from a conflict probably demanded a more explicit description.

Whenever large land units were well known locally—as is the case of *villa* territories—their being transferred apparently did not necessarily require a perambulation of their boundaries. This only seems to have happened when a conflict existed or whenever land divisions were created *de novo*. In our monastic-biased Cardena records, the clearest examples are the donations to the abbey of enclosed woodland or pasture (see below), or the definition of exclusive jurisdictional spaces around the monastery itself.³³ Perambulations entailed a dialogue between supra-local actors and the local community. Persons of authority (or their delegates) had to be present, witnesses were required, landmarks (rocks, crosses, trees) were identified or created afresh. Unfortunately, the Cardena cartulary does not include an appropriate example, but another charter from San Salvador de Oña (O12, 1011) from the end of the comital period, describes a similar event in great detail. Count Sancho García established the boundaries of a large area over which Oña had exclusive rights to pasture and woodland. The ceremony was led by the count, who was accompanied by two judges, nine local elites (*infanzones*), and ‘all others who are in the vicinity’. The boundaries were described in great detail and penalties were established for whoever contravened Oña’s privilege. The deed was acknowledged by the *infanzones*, who pledged to abide by the settlement and signed the document.

The performative character of such practice has been emphasized by several authors,³⁴ and is discussed in detail by Alex Langlands in this volume. The formal recognition of boundaries, the writing down of dispositions, their public reading, the witnessing, probably the oath-taking, and signing, all amounted to a kind of momentous ceremony of landscape changes (both physically and socially) that could imprint itself in local memory, forming DLK. Moreover, the process was two directional, because such a procedure demanded a previous inquiry ‘to survey collective knowledge about the rights of different property-holders’,³⁵ and, importantly, to establish the relevant landscape features and their names – something that could only be done through local oral memory. This was a complex operation: well-known, perhaps very old, marks and names were assembled to define a land division that could be completely new. Again, a very similar process can be envisaged in some of the very detailed Anglo-Saxon boundary clauses.³⁶

Local Memory and Social Networks

The extant Cardena charters preserve precious traces of a densely symbolized landscape that is, for the most part, irretrievably lost. This can be seen in the process of naming, by which unremarkable physical features become individualized; singling them out from their class. Thus, the strictly local references employed in boundary clauses, like fountains, streams, trees, or rocks, turn into characters in the landscape: *fons de Amato, via de pruno, vallis de Ermegildo*. ‘In a fundamental way names create landscapes’, as Chris Tilley put it.³⁷ The unwritten catalogue of names and meanings given to landscape features forms an essential aspect of DLK, and they are entwined in repeated everyday actions that reproduce and reinforce the collective appropriation of local space by its dwellers. Boundary markers in charters must be seen as the tip of the iceberg of a much denser lexicon of field names, boundaries, and topographical features, which

³² ... *de termino de uilla Cisterna et de strata qui discurrit ad Castella; et de alia parte strata qui discurrit ad Poza; et de alia parte, fonte qui dicitur Sabuco...* (C59, 947).

³³ Unfortunately the one that has been preserved for Cardena is a forgery, C158 (972). The much more modest case of San Martín de Modúbar, can be taken instead as a reliable example, C43 (944).

³⁴ See Bowman, *Shifting landmarks*, pp. 194–195 for Catalonia, and more generally Geary, ‘Land, Language and Memory’.

³⁵ Bowman, *Shifting landmarks*, p. 194.

³⁶ Langlands, this volume.

³⁷ Tilley, *A phenomenology of landscape*, p. 19.

were connected to memories, personal recollections, and family/community stories: ‘Why this should be so is embedded in the function, status and role of objects as aide-memoire. Objects are culturally constructed to connote and consolidate the possession of past events associated with their use and ownership’.³⁸

DLK has a fundamental temporal dimension, although on the evidence of charters it is difficult to gauge how far back it went. About 10% of the Cardeña transactions contain inserts of local memory, mostly small hints about the transferred good’s history, as in two donations of 950 (C67, C73) which included plots that the donors had previously bought from other owners, or more explicitly in 915: ‘et alio agro qui est in plano, quem comparaui de Munnio frater et dedi illi uno lecto; et alio agro qui es iusta uinea de fratres in VIII solidos comparato’ (another field on the plain that I bought from from *frater* Munio for one bed; and another field by the monks’ vineyard that I bought for nine *solidi*...) (C9). An exchange of 935 (C26) sheds more light on the circulation of local property. A woman received from Cardeña a field in Ubierna that had formerly belonged to *frater* Juan, together with another field in Arlanzón which had been her own brother’s.³⁹ The latter plot had belonged to the woman’s kindred, then passed to Cardeña, before finally reverting to her. In this case, and in C232 (1033), which remarks that the donor held the three transferred vineyards by inheritance from his father and the latter had them from his father, we can easily infer an interest, not only in locating the property, but also in laying a claim about legitimate ownership that could, if needed, stand up in court.⁴⁰ Most such historical references are nuggets of information about small plots provided by the donors or vendors of similarly small plots; however, they are also sometimes found in high-status transfers of large parcels as information about adjacent land holdings. For example, in 963 (C110) the noble woman Fronilde, together with some relatives, donated to Cardeña a large stretch of woodland, defined by a long perambulation. The landmarks included ‘the valley of Ferrero, which is a field of Gomiz Belaza, which he bought from the brethren of Cardeña’, and ‘the land of Romano Munioz, which formerly belonged to Liciniano’.

In every locality, shared knowledge of property relations was an essential factor of local sociability. This is made visible in the written records mainly through the practice of naming adjacent landowners in transactions. Far from being a private affair, possessing property in the locality affected the whole community, and knowing who owned what was essential information for all households. In the absence of comprehensive property records, only local knowledge could account for land-ownership and its changes with enough precision. This must have constituted a tight web of knowledge about past and present owners and about the links between their families, of which property transfers were often a vehicle. Sadly, our sources cannot illuminate sufficiently those relationships because for most villages we rarely have more than one or two charters, and when we do, they tend not to overlap temporally or spatially. There are exceptions, though, and in those cases the influence of DLK in the dealings between local and supra-local parties becomes much more evident.

For example, several blocks of the Cardeña cartulary record the monastery’s expansion over a holm-oak woodland (*Elzinetum* = Modern Spanish ‘encinar’) to the southeast of their protected jurisdictional space (*cautum*) in between the districts (*alfores*) of Ausín, Juarros and Burgos. This process took place in 963–75 and is recorded in ten charters, with a further expansion documented in the mid-eleventh century. Some of those charters present slight issues with their dates, but can generally be accepted as valid for reconstructing the process. Before 963 Cardeña was in possession of a woodland enclosure (*defesa*), the acquisition of which is undocumented. This initial property was expanded with two large stretches of woodland donated by the aristocrats Fronilde and Diego Gudéstioz (C110, 963; C115, 964), and later on by another separate large enclosure that the count of Castile acquired (C153, 972) and

³⁸ Rowlands, ‘The Role of Memory’, p. 144.

³⁹ ‘et donastis uos abba domno Adefonso ad mici Kirio una terra in Obirna, qui fuit de frater Ihoannes, iusta uilla de Obtuman, et addistis mici alia terra de meo germano Gomiz in Aslanzon’ (and you, Abbot Don Alfonso gave me, Kirio, one land in Ubierna that had belonged to frater Juan, placed by Otmán’s villa, and you added another land of my brother Gómez, in Arlanzón) (C 26, 935).

⁴⁰ ‘ex facultatibus meis, trinas uineas que abeo de pater meus, et pater meus de pater eius auit eas’ (from my belongings, three vineyards that I have from my father, and my father had them from his father) (C 322).

then donated to the monastery (C157, 972). As was to be expected with newly created divisions, all three deeds—especially C115—provided detailed boundary descriptions of rich topographical information, including not only micro-toponyms but also mentions of adjacent landowners. In parallel Cardena extended its exclusive woodland by purchasing small plots from local landowners, as recorded in six extant charters.⁴¹ Taken together, the eight charters from 963–65 contain 174 mentions of 115 different persons, as donors/sellers, owners of adjacent properties, and witnesses, thus constituting an exceptional window into local society.⁴² Nineteen named individuals are clearly aristocrats, including the count of Castile and several members of his family. Besides the abbot of Cardena, a further nine clerics are recorded (two abbots and seven priests), but with few exceptions there is little to suggest that they are anything other than local clerics. All the rest seem to be local people from the neighbouring villages.

To dissect exhaustively this material is beyond the scope of this paper, but some facts are worth noting. Firstly, as is to be expected, most high-status actors—the count of Castile included—feature as witnesses in the two aristocratic donations. However, the brothers Román Muñoz and Vermudo Muñoz seem to be quite active in the local scene. Not only were they co-donors with their aunt Fronilde in the 963 donation, but they also featured in the same charter as holding adjacent properties in the area. Moreover, they appear in the first and second position of the witness lists in four of the six purchase records. Since the latter were essentially local affairs, it seems that both siblings were especially influential in the area, and in fact, their occurrences in the Cardena charters are restricted to the areas neighbouring Cardena to the southeast. Although their noble status seems clear, they might be primarily local notables, with kinship links to the aristocracy. They represent an intermediate position between strictly local people and strictly supra-local aristocrats and their access to local sociability networks seems to have been more direct, hence their role as witnesses.

Deed:	C111(963): Sale of an arable plot	C119(964): Sale of an arable plot	C121(965): Sale of an arable plot	C125(965): Sale of an arable plot	C120(965): Sale of an arable plot	C126(965): Sale of an arable plot
Vendor:	Bela and siblings	Donno	Emeterio	Comasio	Comasio	Comasio
Adjacent owners:	Diego Gudéstioz Gómez	Gómez Belaza Juan, presb. Tello Feles	Tello Feles Liciniano	Focco Gordo Tello Feles Nuño Refugano	Liciniano	Liciniano
Witnesses:	Diego Gudéstioz Lope Ferro Jimeno Belasco Abeza Nuño Severo Muño Gudéstioz Muño Tello Pedro, presb. Rapinato Eneco Lopón Gómez	Román Muñoz Bermudo Muñoz Muño Franco Muño Ratariz Tello Liciniani Tello Feles Juan Emeterio	Román [Muñoz?] Bermudo Muñoz Tuderico Muño Ratariz Donno Gonzalo Alvarez Tello Liciniani	Román Muñoz Uermudo Muñoz Tuderico Muño Ratariz Donno Tello Leciniani	Román Muñoz Uermudo Muñoz Tuderico Muño Ratariz Donno Tello Leciniani	Tuderico Muño Abduz Tello Donno Ferro García, presb. Lopón

Table 1: People intervening in six purchases of land to enlarge Cardena's enclosed woodland (Bold: mentioned more than twice). The transaction of 963 stands out for having a larger witness list and less overlaps with the rest. The other five show a tightly-knit network of landholding, trading and witnessing.

Secondly, with so few records it is hardly surprising that most individuals are mentioned only once, but five transactions involving local people look a lot more compact (Table 1): Tello Feles occurs four times, once as a witness and three times as an adjacent owner; Donno was seller in one charter, and witness in four; Tello Liciniani, Munio Ratáriz and Tuderico were witnesses four times each, and so on, and this is

⁴¹ C111(963); C119(964); C120(965); C124(965); C125(965); C126(965). C120 and C126 record basically the same transaction, with slight differences in the dispositions and (more substantial) in the witness lists. My interpretation is that they are two successive stages of a single (maybe disputed) transaction, and therefore I have considered both as separate charters. I thank Wendy Davies for her comments on these two texts.

⁴² I have treated conservatively the eventual homonymy issues, only accepting the most secure identifications; therefore the total number of individuals could perhaps be reduced by about 5 per cent, but not more.

only a small group of charters affecting a minimal portion of the local territory. Clearly local people tended to get involved in each other's transactions. 'Today's seller would be tomorrow's witness or his property could be mentioned by way of reference.'⁴³ Besides, larger-scale operations affecting the locality were also grounded in local society, as evidenced by the fact that some local actors, like Munio Franco, Tello Feles, Muño Ratariz or Gómez Belaza, also feature as either adjacent owners or witnesses (or both) in the high-status donations of Fronilde and Diego Gudéstioz (C110 and C115).

Thirdly, although local communities and higher-status groups belonged to structurally different social scales, they were all grounded in that local landscape. Aristocratic donations employed accurate information supplied by locals and in turn aristocratic property, from the moment it was created, became just another component of the local landscape to be learnt and referred to as need be. Even if we assume that it was only the local population that really had access to the everyday oral mechanisms of sharing DLK, higher actors could have different degrees of connection into these networks. Whilst the count of Castile obviously only acted locally because of the aristocratic implications of Cardena's expansion, other characters, like Román and Vermudo Muñoz were clearly much more involved in, and—conceivably—
informed about local affairs.

All those interactions underscore the risk of seeing land transfers in early medieval localities primarily under the prism of a 'land market' made of a steady flow of transfers of 'private property'.⁴⁴ Certainly, land plots must have changed hands quite fluidly, not only through sales and exchanges, of which only a minimal fraction are recorded, but also through marriage and inheritance. A notion of 'doing business' might underlie some sales and exchanges—even some donations⁴⁵— but there is every reason to reject seeing them as 'private' operations. The various ways in which local actors participated in their neighbours' deals shows that those were a matter of the utmost local relevance, and in some sense quintessentially 'public', that is, a matter of common knowledge. The object of many such transfers was not just a stretch of land, but the right to exploit it and to participate in a number of local resources that belonged to the sphere of the 'commons', such as paths and roads, waters, pastures and so on.⁴⁶ Communal uses were also strongly linked to common rights and obligations, the micro-citizenships of early medieval Castilian communities. Knowing who owned land where necessarily had to be every local actor's business.

⁴³ The pattern is reminiscent of the one described, with much richer evidence, by Davies, *Small worlds*, pp. 91-95.

⁴⁴ The debate on the existence of a 'land market' in the Middle Ages is too large to engage with in this context. See generally Feller and Wickham, *Le marché de la terre au Moyen Âge*. For Iberia, see the special issue 'El mercado de la tierra en la Edad Media y Moderna. Un concepto en revisión' in *Hispania* 191 (1995) and Pastor et. al., *Beyond the Market* and specifically for the early middle ages Portass, *The Village World*, esp. pp. 72-79 and 145-49.

⁴⁵ Davies, 'When gift is sale'; Davies, 'Exchange charters'.

⁴⁶ Miceli, 'Entre formulismo y enumeración'.

Fig 2: Main places cited in the text. Source: Author. Artwork by Antonio Uriarte (IH-CSIC).

Undefined location and/or boundaries

To end with, we must now turn our attention to the apparently least helpful form of evidence: transactions that do not specify—or hardly specify—the location of transferred goods. Precisely because locating properties and defining their boundaries was so obviously important to transactors,⁴⁷ it is striking that nearly 30% of Cardena records carry little or no such information. About 15 per cent only mention the *villa* where the plot lay, for example: ‘my whole fifth,’⁴⁸ whatever I may gain or claim, that I possess in the territory of *villa* Espinosa’ (C178, 980), and a further per cent contain no information at all, as in a transfer of ‘omnia erentia nostra, terras, uineas, molinos, ortos, domos, armenta, uestimenta, tam mobile quam et immobile, quod ganauimus uel ganare potuerimus in hoc seculo’ (all our inheritance, arable, vineyards, mills, gardens, houses, livestock, clothing, whether assets or real estate, whatever we may have gained or may gain in this life) (C 59 947).

Strikingly, this kind of ill definition never occurs in any of the 35 preserved transactions between private individuals; all cases correspond to transactions between lay people and monasteries or churches. Moreover, a large proportion of undefined or ill-defined locations occur in a particular type of legal affair: the so-called *traditiones corporis et animae*,⁴⁹ which are typical of Castile and particularly abundant among the Cardena charters, although not unheard of in other collections.⁵⁰ By this kind of transaction the donor

⁴⁷ See, generally, Geary, ‘Land, Language and Memory’, p. 176.

⁴⁸ The expression means the fifth of a person’s whole possessions that he/she could freely alienate with no restriction from his/her kindred: see García de Valdeavellano, ‘La cuota de libre disposición’.

⁴⁹ Orlandis Rovira, “Traditio corporis et animae”.

⁵⁰ This was pointed out by Moreta Velayos, *El monasterio de San Pedro de Cardena*, p. 102, and more recently by Davies, *Acts of giving*, p. 54-61.

established an especially close relationship with a monastery, to which he/she granted his/her body and soul, together with some property which may be as much as his/her whole possessions, and which is often transferred *post obitum*. This was sometimes a formal way of joining the community either as monk/nun or as a member of the larger monastic ‘family’, but it also often included elements of patronage, like the monastery’s obligation to provide food and clothing, probably also the right to be buried with the monastic community, although this is by no means its only content.⁵¹ It is not possible in this context to elaborate much about the social meaning of *traditiones corporis et animae*, but it is important to point out that such transactions were exceptional among aristocrats, like that of lady Fronilde who gave herself to Cardena with three whole villages in the *alfoz* of Burgos (C109, 963). Most cases rather seem to correspond to medium-status people, with property in just one or a few localities (although in many cases this cannot be gauged only from the charter’s information). It is likewise relevant that sometimes—but not in most cases—*traditiones corporis et animae* ended up in a dispute between the beneficiary church and the donor or, more often, his or her kin. This may imply that, although formally the act of an individual these transactions actually had the practical effect of connecting whole kin groups to the growing patronage networks of monasteries. They seem to have cleared the path for negotiation, whether in the donor’s lifetime or after his/her death, and probably the best indicator is the characteristic spatial vagueness of *traditiones corporis et animae*. Some may specify carefully the transferred property, but most keep to general formulas, like ‘my whole inheritance’, ‘all I own in the *villa* named X’ or, strikingly, ‘all my belongings wherever you may find them’. Naturally, for the monks who received such vague donations the charter itself was of only relative practical help. If they wanted to know exactly what they had been given, there were two options: if the property was referred to as a *villa*, that could prompt an inquiry with the locals to find out what precisely they had received;⁵² if the donation was of the ‘all I own’ kind (especially if it was also *post obitum*), the obvious step forward would be to negotiate the contents and terms with the donor’s kin; and maybe after that to inquire locally about the whereabouts of each holding.

The Cardena cartulary has transmitted one charter that may bear testimony of such processes. It is a *traditio corporis et animae* of 968 (C134) by which Abbot Galindo gave himself to Cardena, together with all his inheritance and the monastery of San Miguel de Támara which had belonged to his parents. The inheritance comprised arable, vineyards, gardens, orchards, mills, etc., but the charter gives no specific location. However, after the dating clause and the signature of Galindo and those of ‘all the men from Castro Támara’ (‘omnes viris de Castro Tamara hic sunt testimonias’) follows a comprehensive breakdown of the transferred property that looks like an addition to the original charter that was copied seamlessly into the cartulary. What is most interesting in this list is that at one point it mentions the land that ‘belonged to my mother’ (‘fuit the mea ama’) and, more strikingly, one vineyard of ‘Don Galindo, mi relative’ (‘vinea de domno Galindo, meo coiermano’). This points to an inquiry of the contents of the transfer involving Cardena and the donor’s kin group. We cannot be sure how soon after the donation this took place, but it clearly involved people from Abbot Galindo’s generation.

In other words, although at first sight one would think that undefined locations are unhelpful to the study of local knowledge, the opposite is actually the case. Some kind of—characteristically mediated—access to DLK was indispensable in realizing these grants. Moreover, such donations were more than just property transfers: the gift actually marked the beginning of a longer negotiation between the donors’ kindred and the monastery, which would often be not only a superior force and a source of patronage, but also an intruder in the local pattern of land ownership. Sadly, the details of such a relationship cannot be retrieved from the extant evidence.

Discussion

This paper has tried to demonstrate the relevance of Dense Local Knowledge as an interface between local and supra-local actors in tenth-century Castile. As in most societies, DLK was a constantly changing

⁵¹ Cfr. Ruiz Asencio, Ruiz Albi, and Herrero Jiménez, *Los Beceros Gótico y Galicano de Valpuesta*, vol. 1, pp. 122-126.

⁵² Geary makes a similar point for Germany in ‘Land, Language and Memory’, p. 178.

body of shared notions and ideas that worked as an archive of local identities, relationships and histories. It also shaped local landscapes, embedding personal, family and community memories in landscape as a symbolic matrix that emerges only sparingly in our records. The surviving evidence allows few glimpses into these webs of knowledge; '[m]uch that society needs to know is transmitted experientially', as Patrick Geary put it.⁵³ DLK was mainly transmitted through ephemeral channels that are lost to modern scholars: everyday work, casual conversations, rituals, festivals, disputes, tales, proverbs, poems, songs, games and stories. DLK's role as an oral register of land ownership is only a secondary aspect of a much wider sphere of interactions, but it is the one that has left enough traces in the extant written sources to be investigated. A close inspection of the Cardena charters reveals that much of its appearance and functioning needs to be understood in light of the interactions between local society and supra-local actors who recognized DLK as a major resource to gain public recognition of land ownership and to defend it in court.

The Cardena charters contain expressions of DLK of varying kinds and intensities:

(1) Of all recorded legal affairs, piecemeal sales of small land plots are the closest to local practice. Few transactions between lay people survive, but surely many more took place in strictly lay local contexts, without major church involvement.⁵⁴ No doubt many of those were formalized orally, as was not infrequent in medieval and early modern Castile, but a lot of charter making surely happened in the localities too. Wendy Davies' identification of strands of local and micro-regional scribal practice must be related to such a tradition.⁵⁵ Whether oral or written, when local land changed hands, the whole community was concerned. This is apparent in the substantial numbers of local people involved in sales and donations, and the ways in which they swapped roles from vendor/donor to witness of other deeds, to acting merely as locational references for the transferred plot. In his discussion of the rich Catalanian contemporary evidence, Jeffrey Bowman points out that the local witnessing of land was a 'form of engaging the memory of the community' and this is surely also true of Castile.⁵⁶ Moreover, the fact that mentioning adjacent landowners was the preferred method to locate small-scale local transfers clearly puts the stress on people, not topography. Local landowners were supposed to know who their neighbours were and such knowledge was publicly shared in the community and could be retrieved in case of conflict.⁵⁷ Snippets of its ritual, performative nature are fragmentarily preserved in the mentions of actors and/or witnesses having read and heard the terms of the transaction.⁵⁸

(2) DLK was employed by supra-local actors in different ways. Transactions of small plots by high-status people often kept to a similar formula, in their mention of the village, adjacent owners, local witnesses, etc. This is well illustrated by a later example from the cartulary of Sahagún, in the center of the Duero plateau (Sahagún, 4, 1180, 1110). The text narrates how in the 1090s an aristocrat named Gonzalo Núñez decided to build a *palatium* by acquiring a large number of small land plots situated around a church he already controlled. To this end, 'he started to enquire who were those who possessed the land that lay by the church of San Salvador'. When he found out, from those who told him (*cumque a dicentibus cognovisset...*), he negotiated an exchange. Over the next decade, he arranged many other piecemeal sales and exchanges until he completed the desired estate.

This case shows eloquently the importance of gaining information from the locals. However, when new divisions were made in the landscape, more impacting methods, like perambulations, were used. Perambulations are often understood in the literature as the quintessential form of boundary recording in the early middle ages. By contrast, the evidence of the Cardena charters shows this procedure as something rather exceptional. It occurs only in a minority of cases, and responds to very specific circumstances; it affects only very large land units, never small agricultural plots (where mentioning adjacent landholders would suffice), and it happens either in the case of the creation of a new unit that modifies the existing

⁵³ Ibid., p. 173.

⁵⁴ Kosto, '*Sicut mos esse solet*'.

⁵⁵ Davies, 'Local Priests and the Writing of Charters' and this volume.

⁵⁶ Bowman, *Shifting landmarks*, pp. 169-171 and 196.

⁵⁷ This is rarely documented in detail in the early medieval period, but it shows very clearly in later dates. For a very fine analysis of a Castilian thirteenth-century dispute inquiry see Alfonso Antón and Jular Pérez-Alfaro, 'Oña contra Frías'.

⁵⁸ A similar point in Geary, 'Land, Language and Memory', p. 175.

landscape, or in the case of conflict, as a way to terminate or prevent a dispute. But could there be a perambulation without local knowledge? As Alex Langlands shows eloquently in this volume, DLK was no less involved in perambulations of Anglo-Saxon boundaries. It had to be mobilized in order to recognize boundaries on the ground, in a way that often embedded local detail (place-names, landholding, local history and memories) and had a strong ritual character, as seen in the Oña cases described above. Old boundaries were sometimes re-validated. New divisions were sometimes created, but that had to be done using existing landscape features. The scale of such operations, though, is consistently large, ranging from sizeable land units, especially pasture or woodland, to whole villages. In the tenth-century Cardena charters there are no traces of similar procedures applied to supra-local territories, such as districts, again in contrast to Anglo-Saxon England, where charters sometimes record the boundaries of very large-scale territories,⁵⁹ or indeed in contrast to later medieval delimitations of territories such as dioceses, both in Castile and elsewhere.

(3) Negative evidence for DLK is an important aspect of this chapter. For all the local detail that the Cardena transactions contain, the lack of it is just as striking. I have suggested that the notorious ambiguity of some transactions must implicitly reflect the use of DLK as an interface. This works at different scales; for example, the rarity of descriptions of village boundaries clearly indicates that knowledge of such large, long-lived divisions was locally well established and relatively easy to mobilize if needed. At the opposite end, the many transactions—mainly *traditiones corporis et animae*—that do not inform about the specific locations, often not even at village level, must imply the opening up of a dialogue between monasteries, kin-groups and locals.

In other circumstances local knowledge, like all other social structures at that level, could be totally overridden by more powerful social actors, as seems to have happened with the Asturian-Leonese expansion south of the Duero, studied by Martín Viso in this volume. However, the Cardena charters show how members of the Castilian elite used the channels afforded by local societies to build and manage their large-scale patrimonies. They did so by gaining limited, selective access to DLK via their interactions with the locals, and in so doing, they illustrate how the connections between the local and the supra-local could be grounded at the atomised scale. Landscape, however, is here not the subject, but just a metaphor. It represents the local actors without whose participation lordly landownership could hardly be realized; families that could inform about plots in wills, adjacent owners that could be witness to transactions, communities that would keep the memory of those changes. Dense local knowledge is not a database to be searched; it is people to interact with, whether by imposition, negotiation or both, and it reveals itself as a smooth but essential factor in the construction of complexity.

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Abbreviations

Charters are cited by collection followed by their number in the referred edition and, if needed, the year of date. Thus, 'C6, 913' means charter n° 6 of Martínez Díez's edition, dated in 913.

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